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Impact of Creative Arts on At-Risk Youth

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Impact of Creative Arts on At-Risk Youth

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Research Purpose

- To better understand the positive impact arts-based programs have on at-risk youth within our community.



Key Terms

- At-risk youth: Youth (child up to the age of 24) facing the likely chance of being susceptible to social, emotional, and behavioral problems, such as not finishing high school, abuse, homelessness, mental health issues/ addiction, human trafficking, or low self-esteem.
- Creative Arts: The expression of human skill and imagination that take place in various art forms.

Previous Research

- Community-based creative arts offer a medium through which youth direct their energy toward achieving positive social, emotional, and academic outcomes (Wright, John, Alaggia, & Sheel, 2006).
- At-risk youth have social skills and talents that if guided can transform their non conformity into positive change and creative thinking (O'Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996).

Previous Research

- Safe environments where at-risk youth can express themselves in nonviolent ways can have positive impacts on how these individuals view themselves (O'Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996).
- Evaluation of a North Carolina after school art program for at-risk youth highlighted the following positive outcomes (Averett, Crowe, Hall, 2015)
 - Interpersonal social skills
 - Intrapersonal emotional skills
 - Teamwork, communication, confidence, and self-regulation

Participants

- 5 focus group participants, including:
 - Middle & High School Art Teacher
 - Local Musician
 - Local Art Studio Director
 - Director and Professor of Dance
 - Police Officer

Procedures

- Conducted focus group after Institutional Review Board approval
- Took place Spring of 2016 at Mankato State University, Mankato Campus
- Semi-structured interview
- Lasted approximately 1 hour
- Participants signed an informed consent and were made aware they were being recorded
- Participants responded to anonymous Focus Group Evaluation Survey

Average Evaluation Ratings



Focus Group Questions

- Why is important to reach out to youth considered to be at-risk?
- In what way do the arts positively impact youth?
- Why do the arts need to be apart of a youth's curriculum?
- Differentiate the impacts that arts have on youth in comparison to math, science, or sports.
- What type of arts program works good now and what can be improved in arts programs?
- What are they key elements in a creative program for troubled at-risk youth and why?
- Do you feel that the Mankato and surrounding community adequately serve at-risk youth through art programs?

Analysis

- Transcribed the recordings
- Analyzed the data for key themes
- Discussed themes and gained group consensus

Focus Group Themes

- Mentor guidance
 - A caring adult that shows an interest in the well-being of the youth.
- Validation/Self-Worth
 - The feeling of worthwhileness towards a person and their feelings or opinions.
 - Being understood and appreciated by those one interacts with.
- Self-Expression
 - The ability to express one's thoughts, feelings, or ideas through the various art forms.
- Accessibility/Awareness
 - The quality of being easy to obtain or use.
 - Knowledge of or perception of a situation or fact.



Mentor Guidance

- “I think the key to this whole thing is having someone that cares to facilitate it.” – *Local Police Officer*
- “There are two specific things at the art center that I see work in terms of reaching at-risk youth and that is choosing teachers who are really interested in that population (at-risk youth) more so then they’re (teachers) good at art.” – *Local Art Studio Director*



Mentor Guidance

- “So many students want to quit right away. I say try it, and try it again... and again and then when you are ready to quit, come for help and then we try it again and again. It might take us a month to get through a unit but then when they are done with say, pottery, they have a pot in their hand that they can eat their chilli out of, and be so proud of it.”

—*Art Teacher*

Mentor Guidance Research

- “The results of this study indicated that having a mentor positively impacted the academic achievement of at-risk youth. Boys in the treatment group performed significantly better than boys in the control group, as measured by the composite score of the K-TEA Brief Form. In addition, the treatment group performed better in reading and math than the control group” (Thompson, & Kelly-Vance, 2001).
- “Children who met with their mentor regularly for about a year were 46% less likely than the control group to start drinking, 52% less likely to skip a day of school, and 37% less likely to skip a class” (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002).

Mentor Guidance Research

- “The mentees were likely to be more trusting of their parents or guardians and less likely to lie to them, as well as to feel more supported and less criticized by their peers and friends” (Keating, Tomishima, Foster, & Alessandri, 2002).

Validation

- “I got recognition for what I was doing (creating music) which I didn't receive before.” – *Local Artist*
- “I think that’s true, a sense of place, a voice, self-discovery, new friends, and different ways of being in the world... they are so important for any child developmentally, whether they are at-risk or not.” (speaking about artistic expression) – *Director and Professor of Dance*



Validation

- “We are a welcoming and safe place for the introverted, misfit, obsessive kids and adults on the autism spectrum. So not only is he finding fulfillment and enjoyment and acceptance from these other introverts at the art center who hang out making pots 8 hours a day.” – *Local Art Studio Director*

Validation Research

- “Art education is a vehicle to help a child find self-worth and see himself as the protagonist in his own story” (O’Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996).
- “Troubled youth can create art they view as valuable, and that sense of value can be transferred to the self. (O’Thearling & Bickley-Green, 1996).

Validation Research

- “When students begin to see more clearly how they relate with one another in the group they gain awareness of the roles they bring to their interactions with others, whether with family members, friends, teachers, or even strangers” (Sutherland, Waldman, & Collins, 2010).

Self-Expression

- “Scientists are artists, artists are scientists. There’s a creative endeavor in an experimental process that goes through throwing a pot or creating a dance or rehearsing a monologue.” – *Local Art Director*
- “(Art) is an actual interactive thing that I do and I experience.” – *Local Police Officer*



Self-Expression

- “(With art), whatever the product or the performance is, how ever it manifests itself is so revealing about what is going on in these young peoples minds. It gives them such an outlet to express it in ways they normally might not feel comfortable or have access to.” – *Director and Professor of Dance*

Self-Expression Research

- “Therapeutic approaches that incorporate artistic and creative expression are beneficial for children” (Gladding, 1998).
- “Children will gravitate toward forms of expression that will help them to communicate feelings safely” (Klorer, 2000).

Self-Expression Research

- “Because children tend to be at ease when creating something, expressive interventions also facilitate rapport. Creative techniques [...give ...] concrete expression to emotions that might otherwise remain confusing and overwhelming” (Bradley, Whiting, Hendricks, Parr, & Jones, 2008; Rubin, 2005).
- "Creative play is a child's natural medium of expression and so therapeutic approaches that involve play, art, and creativity meet children on their own terms" (Landreth, 2002).

Accessibility/Awareness

- “Mankato is boring for families, and when I go to the twin cities, stuff for the arts, stuff they can get into, they have stuff all the time for families.” – *Police Officer*
- “Art is not top priority because they have to teach to the test.” – *Art Teacher*
- “We used to do 2 field trips a year, I took them up to (Minneapolis/St. Paul). But then there were budget cuts, so there’s no longer any field trips.” – *Art Teacher*



Accessibility/Awareness Research

- “Proximity to a metropolitan area often allows citizens to access major performing arts centers, museums, and a myriad of cultural activities and markets for cultural goods. In areas where this type of urban infrastructure doesn't exist, state arts agencies provide crucial services and programming through a variety of community facilities such as schools, community centers and other public venues” (Matula, 2013)

Accessibility/ Awareness Research

- “The arts help to address some of the unique challenges faced by rural communities, including geographic isolation, infrastructure limitations and population flight. The arts can help to diversify rural economies by creating sustainable small businesses, improving quality of life for residents, and attracting visitors and investment” (Matula, 2013).
- “As school districts battle for the funds necessary to ensure students achieve acceptable scores on standardized testing in math and reading, programs for music, the visual arts, and dance seem to fall victim to cuts in the curriculum, leaving a cultural void to be filled through other means” (Ersing, 2009).

Conclusion

- Mentor guidance, validation, and self expression are crucial in providing an outlet for youth considered to be at-risk.

Implications & Future Research

- All types of creative art forms are beneficial for self-expression.
- Importance of evaluating the effectiveness of arts and community-based art programs for at-risk youth.
- Necessary for grant and funding for local programs.
- Provide additional support for further development into arts outreach programs, and how to make creative arts more accessible (financially and physically) within our local community.
- Results of this study may be used by participating community agencies in advocacy, marketing, and fundraising. Information may be informative for local school decision-makers, social service providers, and advocates for arts in education.

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Questions



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